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ABSTRACT

Part-time college instructors with children are not perceived as professionals, and therefore they often do not advance to full-time status. Their inability to move out of the area limits their possibilities for full-time work and colleges often exploit this. Of the part-time women interviewed by members of a panel at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, nearly two-thirds mentioned family obligations that prevented them from relocating. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that pay for part-timers is so low. At Santa Barbara City College, for instance, part-timers earn about $25,000 less than full-time faculty. Part-time women, most of whom are mothers, must often seek other employment and thus cannot participate in the committee work, curriculum development, and classroom research that make a job candidate professionally competitive. However, most female part-time instructors in California state college English departments are mothers. The prejudice against women with children is deep-seated in the profession. From graduate school onward, women with children are not taken seriously as professional teachers and scholars. Solutions to the problem might include the possibility of shared contracts (more than one person working under a single professorship); more mentoring for women; tenure for part-time instructors; and day-care facilities. (TB)

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Sandy Bottiani

Part Time Teaching/ Full Time Parenting/ Full Time Consequences
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Most of the female part time instructors in California college English departments are mothers. This fact hinders their ability to advance to tenured teaching positions. Women with children in this field are not perceived as professionals, and therefore they often don't advance to full time status. Their inability to move out of the area limits their possibilities for full time work and colleges often exploit this. Of the part time women the panel surveyed, nearly 2/3 mentioned family obligations which prevented them from relocating. Realizing that these women are paralyzed, colleges rely on their talents, unafraid that they will move on to better jobs.

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the pay for part timers is so low. Hourly instructors at the college where I work earn approximately 25,000 dollars less than full time faculty. Part time women often must seek other employment and thus cannot participate in the committee work, curriculum development and classroom research which make a job candidate professionally competitive. Nearly every survey we collected reflected this phenomena. One part time woman summarized the views of many others, stating,

> Because I am a part timer, I also hold another half time job. This limits my ability to attend department meetings and to attend professional conferences. It also limits the time I can volunteer for committees. I also feel that once a person is a "part timer," she is seen as "part time" forever--she is not seen as a serious professional.

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Another woman added,

> The disparity between full time and part time pay and respect is crazy. It's tough to volunteer for extra jobs, even when interesting, when the reciprocation for such services doesn't make ends meet.

Many part timers mentioned the financial hardship of being single parents and working 2 or 3 jobs in order to survive economically.

Single parents aren't the only ones who struggle in this field, however; married women who stay home part time encounter obstacles as well. Whether married or single, women with children are not viewed as competent, hardworking professionals. One part time woman stated in her survey, "It is clear to most people in the department that my family is a priority for me. I don't apologize for that, but I feel that it may be used against me: either you are a carreer professional or a mother, but not both." I myself have experienced this kind of labelling to a large extent. It is well known in my department that I have three children. Consequently, when I see one administrator around campus, his first comment to me is always, " How are those babies?" He never asks how my classroom research is going, or about my participation in our experimental multicultural program, but instead chooses to focus on my status as a parent.

Similarly, last year, when I asked a full time faculty member to write me a letter of recommendation for a job, she looked at me with surprise and stated, "I had no idea that you were interested in full time work. What about the kids?" The fact that we are not even

perceived as potential candidates for full time positions is frightening--especially when one notes that these individuals will make up the hiring committee which decides our future. Whether conscious or unconscious, assumptions are made about women with children that hinder their ability to achieve success.

The sources of these problems for women are numerous and complicated, leading back to stereotyping which begins in grade school. One part timer aptly describes the factors which have lead to low level jobs for many women:

> The factors that hinder my job success are historical. I was never encouraged to go to graduate school because I was female. As a result, when I needed to support myself (due to a divorce), I was not only not professionally prepared, but I didn't have the mind set to know where to begin. I got my graduate degree in a field that was fun for me (Communications) and not one which would help my career. I didn't realize that I needed to have a more professional career track focus to my plans. So I am hindered by never having prepared in the first place.

Women who are pregnant or have small children in graduate school are given a clear message: complete the MA and get out. You'll never be a scholar. One part time woman comments:

> I did feel that being pregnant and having small children in graduate school affected the level of success I could achieve. Professor's perceived me as having limited potential due to my family obligations.

I myself had young children in graduate school, and I believe without question that I was stereotyped. When I told one professor, who had always treated me as a smart, dedicated student, that I had

children, he was shocked. He flat out told me that he didn't see how I could possibly succeed. From that point on, whenever I saw this man, he would ask in a concerned, fatherly tone, " How are you," as if I must be having a nervous breakdown from the stress. His perception of me changed from that of a hardworking, intelligent scholar to a frazzled, disorganized, overworked mother. When I becam pregnant with my third child, needless to say this kind of stereotyping peaked. I finished my MA and then left, as did the only other woman with children that I knew in the department. During the time that I was a student, I had only one class from a female professor. Of the few women in the department, nearly all had followed the male model for success, and did not have children. Thus, I had no mentors; I saw no one in my chosen profession whose life paralleled mine in the least. And when women (or minorities) do not see themselves represented in their chosen careers, the message is clear: there is no place for you in this field.

The consequences of this kind of stereotyping and discrimination are visible: women are underrepresented in this profession, and women with children especially are locked into low level teaching jobs. The cycle perpetutates itself, because young women with children who want to enter the field have no mentors or encouragement to do so. Women who are the heads of young families have no health benefits at a time when they most need them, and thus are forced to seek employment elsewhere, or stay in their low paying jobs, supplementing them with clerical work or whatever else they can find. Women who stay home with their

children and return to the profession after their children are raised face the problem of ageism. Either way, these women and their families suffer, and society as a whole suffers as well because it is deprived of the contributions of talented young women.

The part timers we surveyed offered several different solutions to these complex problems. Flexible/shared contracts were widely mentioned. At our college, a female, tenure track faculty member did propose shared contracts a year ago to the administration to no avail. The plan that she proposed would have cost the college less (because the salary would have been at the step of the lesser experienced teacher) and the health benefits would have been shared. The only response she received was a vague, "probably wouldn't work well," which she translated as,"sounds like too much trouble." Currently in California public schools there are shared contracts given at no extra cost to the already overburdened system. This plan has been a great success so far. A sixth grade teacher with a shared contract whom I interviewed said, "The school gets a great deal, because my colleague and I put in more than 1/2 time each--for the same amount of money as one full time salary." More research should be done on the value of shared contracts, and we must continue to present this alternative to administrators.

Other solutions mentioned by those we surveyed were more mentoring for women in the profession, and also tenure for part timers. Many women also emphasized that day care facilities for women with children are sorely needed. Colleges must be willing to

invest money, as the private sector has, in their employees with families.

A change in attitude and some sensitivity to the special problems that women face, especially as part time instructors, is also crucial. Full time faculty and adminstrators need to be aware that exploitative working conditions create a hopelessness in the underclass which inhibits good teaching and professional development. As one part timer aptly states, "It would be nice if there were some hope of ever achieving full time status with benefits. The absence of hope is humiliating."

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